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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: JAM CONTROLLING BAGHDAD'S SHIA NEIGHBORHOODS

Classified By: Political Counselor Matthew H. Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM) militants have seized control of many of Baghdad's Shia neighborhoods, according to Embassy, Baghdad PRT, and Baghdad EPRT contacts. JAM has taken over key streets and public spaces, limiting movement between and within Shia-majority neighborhoods on both sides of the Tigris River. They have not yet raided Sunni-majority areas, which appear calmer than Shia and mixed-sect areas. JAM militants have targeted Iraqi Security Forces, Coalition Forces, and the International Zone, and they have methodically closed many markets, schools, and shops while reportedly implanting improvised explosive devices and storing and stockpiling weapons and ammunition in public places and at private businesses. Locals have not distinguished in their reports between the actions of regular JAM members and the Special Criminal Groups (SCGs), but we believe that SCGs are responsible for much of the violence, while other members of JAM and the Office of the Martyr Sadr have heeded the public exhortations to peaceful civil disobedience attributed to Muqtadr Al-Sadr (MAS). Even as MAS and some of his representatives apparently call for calm, rumors are circulating in Shia areas of Baghdad -- reportedly initiated by some Shia imams -- that MAS has called an end to the 'freeze' on violent attacks. END SUMMARY.

ISF APPEARS UNPREPARED, ABANDONING CHECKPOINTS

¶2. (C) A senior Iraqi Army officer as well as local contacts have expressed serious concern about the Prime Minister's decision to commence military operations in Basra, implying that the Prime Minister forced the start of military operations before the military was ready for them or even believed them necessary. According to the same officer, the Iraqi Army's focus on manning check points has diminished the number of soldiers positioned to carry out military operations, and many of its soldiers remain loyal to militias. Numerous, credible reports indicate that some Iraqi Police and National Police have protected or aided militants. Iraqi Security Forces have abandoned checkpoints around Sadr City and several neighborhoods in 9 Nissan district.

ACTIONS APPEAR PLANNED

¶3. (C) The rapid rate at which JAM has reportedly implanted improvised explosive devices, positioned vehicle-borne explosive devices, seized control of public and private institutions, launched indirect fire into the International Zone, kidnapped a key official (Tahseen Sheikhly), and intimidated many members of the Iraqi Security Forces suggest that their actions involved pre-meditation, and possibly extensive planning.

KIDNAPPING OF HIGH-PROFILE GOI SPOKESMAN

14. (C) According to local media, the kidnapping of Tahseen Sheikhly at his home in the Shia-majority neighborhood of Amin in 9 Nissan district took place at approximately three p.m. when kidnappers driving Ministry of Interior (MoI) vehicles and dressed as IP commandos seized him and killed an unknown number of bodyguards. Sheikhly, a Sunni, has served as the public face of the Baghdad Security Plan for approximately six months as the lead civilian spokesman for Fard Al Qanoon (the Baghdad Security Plan). Sheikhly recently began to serve as the spokesman for the Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR).

WHO IS FIGHTING WHOM IN BAGHDAD?

15. (C) Most local contacts view the current conflagration as an extension of the broader feud between the Sadrist Trend and ISCI/Badr. Reports from across the city indicate that the majority of residents are remaining at home in order to avoid what they fear will be increasing levels of violence. Post notes, however, that Friday mosque sermons may play an important role in either escalating or dampening the violence in Baghdad.
CROCKER